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TO : Department of State

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FROM : AmEmbassy SAIGON

DATE: June 15, 1966

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SUBJECT : [redacted]'s View of Political Parties

REF :

Attached is a Memorandum of Conversation summarizing [redacted]'s views regarding political parties and the forthcoming elections. [redacted] is a newly appointed member of the expanded Directorate. He is a former magistrate who in 1945 held a minor post in Ho Chi Minh's government and served in two Bao Dai governments. He has participated in all three bodies which have been engaged in preparations for the constituent assembly elections.

[redacted] believes that the September elections will be held as scheduled and that in them political-religious groupings will be more important than most political parties. His views reflect his Catholic political orientation.

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Enclosure: Att 1

1. Memorandum of Conversation

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REVIEWED BY [redacted] DATE 10/4/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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Drafted by: POL:AAFrancis:kw 6-15-66

Contents and Classification Approved by: POL:PCHabib

Clearances: POL:JEBurke

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: June 14, 1966

SUBJECT: [redacted] View of Political Parties

PARTICIPANTS: [redacted], Directorate Member
Albert A. Francis, Second Secretary of Embassy

During dinner on June 14 [redacted] a [redacted] member of the expanded Directorate, discussed political parties and the forthcoming national elections. He was quite relaxed, obviously proud of his new position, and the following is believed to accurately reflect his present opinions:

1. The elections will be held as scheduled. Opposition from the Vien Hoa Dao will not be sufficient to significantly change the government's present plans for elections in September.

2. Buddhist clergy involvement in Southern Vietnamese politics as distinct from Central Viet-Nam is a new phenomena imported from Hue. Its importance is restricted to the relatively small following of the more radical leaders in the Vien Hoa Dao primarily in and around Saigon.

3. [redacted] made much of Thich Tri Quang's younger brother being a Buddhist priest in the Communist North and said that Buddhist involvement in the politics of Central Viet-Nam was, in turn, an "importation from North Viet-Nam".

4. Thich Tri Quang reversed himself on elections when he saw that he was not yet strong enough to win significant numbers of votes outside of Central Viet-Nam.

5. The only Vietnamese parties which will be of major importance in the forthcoming elections are the old standards such as the VNQDD and the Dai Viet. The other 60 or 70 parties which have from time to time appeared are each the work of only a few men with very small followings. Many of these parties were formed by opportunistic politicians hoping to obtain financial support from the USG.

6. Religious groups will be the major corner stone during the next election. Religious-political groupings such as the Catholic Citizen's Block, the Vien Hoa Dao, the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, etc. will elect the candidates from "their areas". [redacted] ressed the "party discipline" of these groups and thought that each would be able to elect candidates

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pretty much in proportion to their own numerical importance in the various areas of Viet-Nam.

Comment:

a Northerner, is a [ ] who in 1945 held a minor post in Ho Chi Minh's government and served in two Bao Dai governments. He has participated in all three bodies which have been engaged in preparations for the constituent assembly elections. He has, in the past, also been active in a number of Northern Catholic groups and his views on the forthcoming elections, while fairly objective, strongly reflect his Catholic orientation. He seems quite confident that "overall Catholic political organization" is sufficiently well-organized and unified to elect the "Catholic share" of candidates in the forthcoming elections. He believes that the Catholic Citizen's Block and Father Quynh's Catholic Greater Unity Force will be most active political organizations in electing Catholics to the Assembly. While he did not commit himself to an estimate of the number of Catholics who would be elected he did, in another context, say that the Catholics comprised 10% of the population of South Viet-Nam and 15% of the population in the Saigon area.

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